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Synthesis of voluntary submissions by functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and other intergovernmental bodies and forums

Note by the Secretariat

The present document provides a synthesis of the voluntary submissions prepared by functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and other intergovernmental bodies and forums in response to an invitation by the President of the Council, contained in his letter to the Chairs of those bodies dated 11 August 2016, for them to offer substantive inputs to the high-level political forum on sustainable development, highlighting their contributions towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.[1] The integral texts of the submissions received in time for the present synthesis report is available on the forum's website.[2]

[1] The present document has benefited from inputs by the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, the Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission on Population and Development, the Committee of Experts on Public Administration, the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Peacebuilding Commission, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Conference of the Parties to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, the World Trade Organization, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Global Forum on Migration and Development, the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, the Industrial Development Board of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the International Labour Organization, the International Telecommunication Union, the Partnership on Measuring Information and Communication Technology for Development, Sanitation and Water for All, the Committee on World Food Security, the Global Education 2030 Steering Committee, the World Bank Group, the United Nations Environment Assembly, the Standing Committee on Nutrition, the Ozone Secretariat, the World Energy Council and the World Water Council.

[2] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/inputs/.

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I. Introduction

1. The present document is based on a synthesis of voluntary submissions by functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and other intergovernmental bodies and forums in response to the invitation by the President of the Council contained in his letter to the Chairs of those bodies.[3]

2. The invitation by the President of the Council is in line with the call in paragraph 85 of General Assembly resolution 70/1, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", for thematic reviews of progress on the Sustainable Development Goals to be held at the high-level political forum on sustainable development. The thematic reviews will be supported by reviews by the functional commissions and other intergovernmental bodies and forums. In his letter, the President invited recipients to share relevant input and deliberations as to how they address the goals and targets from the perspective of "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world".

3. The invitation by the President of the Council reached 83 intergovernmental bodies, identified through an initial list prepared by the members of the Inter-Agency Technical Assistance Support Team.[4] The list comprises global platforms; intergovernmental organization-driven mechanisms were added only in the absence of a United Nations-led global process on a specific Sustainable Development Goal or target. The list should be regarded as an evolving tool to be aligned closely with the themes and focus of future sessions of the high-level political forum.

4. While the call for inputs did not include a focused request for thematic analysis of the Sustainable Development Goals under review at the 2017 high-level political forum, several commissions, platforms and other bodies included additional reflections on these particular goals. These inputs provide qualitative analysis that can complement the quantitative one contained in the mandated progress report on the Sustainable Development Goals.

5. The present report reflects how the functional commissions and expert bodies of the Council and other intergovernmental forums and bodies are responding to the theme of the 2017 high-level political forum and does not suggest a formal reporting link to the forum or modify any entity's mandate or governance. The entities reflected on the 2017 high-level political forum theme, "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world", and analysed the lessons learned, gaps and challenges and emerging issues related to the theme.

II. Those left behind

6. The commitment to "leave no one behind" is a key feature of the 2030 Agenda. It is also a promise that will not be fulfilled without concerted efforts by all Member States and all stakeholders, including the commissions, platforms and other bodies that provided inputs to the present report. These entities adopted different approaches to their analysis, while reflecting on the need to leave no one behind and on the theme of the 2017 forum.

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[3] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/12890Letter_of_ECOSOC_President_to_functional_commissions_and_IG_bodies_thematic_reviews_at_2017_HLPF.pdf.

[4] The Inter-Agency Technical Assistance Support Team prepared the list in 2014 in response to a request by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. The list has since evolved to respond to various needs and demands and is available from: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5459Tentative%20list%20of%20review%20and%20coordination%20platforms.pdf.

7. About 1 billion people in developing countries live in extreme poverty, and two thirds of them live in rural areas. Almost half of all people worldwide living in extreme poverty are 18 years old or younger, meaning that close to 570 million children are deprived of their dignity and the right to an adequate standard of living.

8. Multiple forms of malnutrition are occurring today. Almost 2 billion people are overweight or obese, a figure that continues to grow and increases the risk of non-communicable diseases. Meanwhile, almost 800 million people are undernourished, most of them living in rural areas. The number includes 156 million children under the age of 5 years who are affected by stunting and 50 million affected by wasting. Despite recent progress, 1.1 billion people, predominantly rural dwellers, still live without electricity, half of them in sub-Saharan Africa. More than 3 billion people, the majority of them in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, still lack access to clean cooking fuels and technologies.

9. Close to 58 million children of primary school age are not in school, with as many as 250 million failing to learn basic literacy or numeracy owing to poor quality education.

10. The brunt of the drug abuse problem is borne by people who are poor in relation to the societies in which they live. Women, children and youth affected by drug dependence are particularly vulnerable to deprivation, prone to stigmatization and exposed to particular negative risk factors.

11. In 2016, 3 out of 10 working women and men in emerging and developing countries were unable to earn enough to lift themselves and their families above the moderate poverty threshold of $3.10 per day.

III. Gaps and challenges and lessons learned

12. The vast majority of the inputs to the present report stressed one key tool for implementation: sustained poverty eradication and prosperity are possible only if integrated and balanced approaches are taken to sustainable development in partnership with multiple stakeholders. It was recognized that, because of the complexity, multifaceted nature and interlinkages of our world, achieving the 2030 Agenda as a whole would contribute to achieving the specific aims of these entities, and vice versa.

13. In general, it was noted in the inputs for the present report that none of the individual Sustainable Development Goals or the related targets can be sustainably achieved in isolation or using simple fixes. Fundamental transformations of economic and social institutions, norms and beliefs will be required to achieve true sustainable development.

A. Reaching the furthest behind

14. Leaving no one behind means not just focusing on ensuring progress for entire countries, reflected by averages, but looking specifically at the people who are not benefiting from development because current strategies have been unsuccessful in reaching them. To identify the poorest and most vulnerable people and understand their needs, public institutions need to have an in-depth and holistic understanding of various dimensions and manifestations of poverty, and of who is at risk of being left behind.

15. Inequalities are often perpetuated on the basis of multiple intersecting forms of discrimination, including, inter alia, gender, age, race or ethnicity, belonging to

majority or minority groups, migration status, sexual orientation or gender identity, disability and income level. While some groups at risk are specified in the 2030 Agenda, others are not mentioned but should be taken into consideration in the implementation. Many of these factors are often overlooked, and hence the burdens of persons experiencing multiple discrimination remain unaddressed. For example, in the least developed countries, a woman living in a rural area is less likely to give birth attended by a skilled health professional than her counterpart in the city. These disparities have narrowed in some countries, but in others they have widened.

16. Violent conflict is one of the serious obstacles to sustainable development. Leaving no one behind requires a particular focus on conflict-affected countries since a significant and increasing share of the extreme poor is living in such countries. Addressing the root causes and drivers of violent conflict is crucial, but it is equally important to ensure that those affected by conflict or protracted crisis situations, and those who are displaced internally or externally as a result of conflict or natural disasters, will enjoy the benefits of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, despite being difficult to reach.

17. While specific focus is required to ensure that the furthest behind are reached, a transformative change allowing equal quality gains for all should be sought. For instance, in relation to gender equality, rather than simply absorbing more girls into underfunded dysfunctional educational systems, schools should aim at providing quality education and a safe learning environment for girls and boys, as well as contributing to the promotion of equality through progressive curricula and well trained teachers. This applies also to the urgent need to extend nationally defined social protection floors that would reach those who are vulnerable, while enhancing the lives of entire populations.

18. It is important to remember that vulnerable groups can also be a strong positive force, if the necessary support measures are taken. Migrants, for example, deserve particular protection in order to ensure that they will not be left behind. However, one should also bear in mind that migration very often contributes to development and migrants are actors capable of bringing about positive change. International migration can for example attenuate the impact of population ageing, just to mention one positive impact.

B. Integration and cross-cutting issues

19. It is notable that all the inputs highlighted the importance of integrating and mainstreaming their focus areas into national development plans, budgets and other implementation efforts.

20. Sustainable development requires a whole-of-government approach involving ministries, local authorities, agencies and a multiplicity of actors working across sectors. This is to ensure that synergies, conflicts and trade-offs that arise in policy design and implementation in the various areas are taken into consideration. In this vein, it is important that people have free access to information concerning the law and government regulations, a precondition for the effective rule of law.

21. Many countries have been creating interministerial and other coordination and collaboration arrangements for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. These need to be supplemented by arrangements to ensure cooperation between groups of institutions working on given target(s) and by efforts to promote cooperation among civil servants and all other relevant actors. Local governments, being the government institutions closest to the people, have a particular role by working in close collaboration and partnership with citizens and the central Government.

22. A cautious voice was also raised. Considering that the 2030 Agenda has 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets, the temptation is great to pick and choose a specific goal or target above others. Indeed, the United Nations and its Member States have repeatedly highlighted that the Sustainable Development Goals are integrated and indivisible, and the high-level political forum could focus on proposing concrete guidance on how this can be achieved on the ground.

23. Sustainable development strategies should also be integrated with other national strategies related to internationally agreed development frameworks, such as the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third United Nations Conference on Financing for Development, the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway) and the New Urban Agenda.

C. Working together

24. Cooperation and inclusion are key words for implementation. In general, the inputs highlighted the need to include all relevant actors in the efforts, at all levels of implementation.

25. A key aspect for institutional arrangements for planning and implementation at the national level is the effective engagement of civil society, local authorities, indigenous peoples, local communities, academia and all other relevant actors. Such approaches are most effective when they are adopted at the earlier stages of planning and decision-making. Support should be provided to strengthen the capacity of stakeholders and availability of the information that enables the use of those approaches in decision-making processes.

26. Emphasis is also placed on promoting cooperation with financial institutions and the private sector, which is at the forefront of science, technology and innovation. While leveraging the capital and expertise of the private sector, the importance of working directly with industries and enterprises was highlighted. Such open interaction can also facilitate the eagerness of the private sector to accept new rules and regulations and to find creative, more sustainable solutions.

27. It was noted in several inputs to the report that the participating bodies and platforms have made additional efforts to ensure that the voices of stakeholders are adequately heard in the intergovernmental processes, for example through multi-stakeholder dialogues, hearings or through gathering inputs.

28. There is a need to ensure integration, collaboration and coherence among United Nations entities in delivering integrated support on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Further coordination and cooperation was also called for between the high-level political forum and the various commissions, platforms and other bodies that submitted inputs for the current report, both in supporting implementation and enhancing monitoring and follow-up.

D. Safeguarding human rights and good governance

29. The pledge to leave no one behind and reach those furthest behind first is strongly aligned with the human rights imperative to tackle inequality and discrimination. It was noted that in many contexts, a review of existing policies and legislation will be necessary to ensure a supportive environment for the protection of human rights in national implementation. This will require legislation to be

reviewed from the perspective of human rights, including rights of women and children and indigenous peoples.

30. It was noted that the requirements applied to State actors, such as respect for the rule of law and human rights and fundamental freedoms, should apply to all stakeholders, including private businesses, civil society and academia. All actors should be held accountable and responsible for the impact of their activities on society and development.

31. In order to combat stigmatization and discriminatory social norms and practices, States should take multiple appropriate measures, including awareness-raising through education, the media and other channels. This requires the support of community or religious leaders, civil society groups, key government institutions and their representatives, as well as educational institutions, parents and children themselves.

32. Practices of good governance are essential in order to eliminate poverty and promote prosperity. The rule of law, public security, an independent judiciary and the proper administration of justice are also important for supporting poverty eradication and the rights of the poorest and most vulnerable. Independent audit institutions can also be engaged.

33. The impact of social, economic and other policies is even greater when supported by legal measures to combat discrimination in access to public services, especially in areas such as employment, access to education and health care. Measures are also necessary to remove or overcome obstacles to accessing public services, including financial costs, language, culture, remoteness and a lack of access to infrastructure or technology.

34. Realizing the Sustainable Development Goals requires transforming bureaucratic mindsets and the modus operandi of public institutions and public administrations. Proposed steps include:

(a) Ensure continuing strong political will and transformational leadership at the highest level to drive the initiation, formulation and implementation of poverty eradication policies in all parts of the government and public administration;

(b) Ensure that public management takes into account the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable in every action through sustained public engagement;

(c) Introduce or reinforce anti-discrimination measures for public sector employment so that public administrations at the local and national levels are fully representative of all segments of society;

(d) Mobilize civil servants at all levels around poverty eradication and the other Sustainable Development Goals and bolster their knowledge, capacities and skills to develop adequate anti-poverty measures that are truly participatory and inclusive;

(e) Equip civil servants with innovative tools and the requisite knowledge to understand the interrelationships among the various aspects of poverty and create and implement integrated approaches;

(f) Put in place internal mechanisms, incentives and practices and develop skills so as to promote participation, engagement, cooperation and consultation with other institutions and civil society;

(g) Undertake and support efforts to ensure that adequate resources are mobilized and allocated to poverty eradication and related strategies;

(b) Boost institutional statistical capacities at all levels to produce, use and analyse disaggregated official indicators, statistics, data and big data, and promote their shared use across government agencies at all levels, the private sector, civil society and other actors.

E. Adjusting timelines

35. It was noted that in many cases lasting development requires both short- and longer-term interventions (a twin-track approach). Emphasis should be placed on longer-term development of institutions and capacities even if they are harder to quantify and take a longer time. For instance, providing assistance to conflict-affected countries is risky, and results might be elusive for some time. While there is demand from donor countries for concrete results, measuring peacebuilding results in correlation to financial investment is difficult. It may take a decade or longer to be able to report tangible results on the strengthening of institutions that are critical to building peace and sustainable development.

F. Data

36. The 2030 Agenda stresses that quality, accessible, timely and reliable disaggregated data will be needed to help with the measurement of progress and to ensure that no one is left behind. This emphasis is highlighted by the synthesized inputs for the present report.

37. Currently, the disaggregated data required to monitor many of the goals and targets are seriously lacking, and policymaking still has to rely on rather piecemeal data. The weak availability of data in conflict-affected countries or related to people in emergency situations, as well as to migrants, was particularly highlighted. Disaggregated data provides a fuller understanding of equality and the development of appropriate and targeted policies and development programmes, and further use of new data for analysis of interlinkages between targets should be encouraged. It was recommended in the inputs that data disaggregation should be done on the basis of anonymity and self-identification so as to avoid misuse of data. Apart from quantitative data, extensive use should be made of other administrative data and qualitative data and reports describing interlinked systems as a whole.

38. However, new sources of data that are constantly being developed can support the planning of effective policies for implementation. Big data and machine learning can be used to predict epidemics, medical necessities, environmental disasters and poverty levels. For example, using simple metadata digital footprints like call duration and call frequency, it has been shown that one can predict socioeconomic, demographic and other behavioural traits with 80-85 per cent accuracy.

G. Means of implementation

39. None of the Sustainable Development Goals will be met without sufficient means of implementation. It is therefore urgent to strengthen global partnerships for realizing the Goals so as to ensure that developing countries have the level of resources and capacities necessary to eradicate poverty. North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation are therefore essential.

40. Adequate financing remains a challenge. Public and private investment, including international cooperation and foreign direct investment, should be increased to be able to face the enormous needs for investment to implement the

Goals. Simultaneously, it is crucial to continue ensuring that aid is spent effectively: development partners should live up to commitments to make development cooperation funding increasingly predictable and transparent.

41. In numerous inputs, the lack of capacity development in their area of expertise was referred to. Capacity-building refers to strengthening the human and institutional capacity of developing countries. These measures include such actions as providing support to adapt to an evolving information and communications technology (ICT) and telecommunications sector, or providing training to law enforcement, border control and other relevant agencies to counter illicit drug and wildlife trafficking.

42. Some other policy recommendations made include:

(a) Increase the use of national systems, including procurement systems. Only half of development cooperation payments to the public sector used country systems in 2015. Most countries still need to make improvements in making their budgets more comprehensive and credible, including linking their budgets effectively to policy priorities, implementing expenditure in a controlled and predictable way and subjecting budgets to timely and accurate accounting, fiscal reporting and public auditing;

(b) Increase gender budgeting;

(c) In line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, establish and strengthen comprehensive and holistic frameworks to manage the totality of diverse development finance flows;

(d) Transparency in development activities, gender tracking systems, development planning and mutual assessment reviews, as well as in development cooperation, is essential for fostering strong multi-stakeholder partnerships and accountability;

(e) Effective multi-stakeholder partnerships can be a central tool to share knowledge, technologies and innovation, and in mobilizing additional financial and non-financial resources, including through South-South, North-South and triangular cooperation;

(f) Partnerships must recognize the specific challenges in middle-income countries and fragile and conflict-affected States, as well as the importance of gender equality and youth inclusion. Increased private sector engagement and strengthening the enabling environment for the role of civil society are critical;

(g) Ensure all development interventions are country led and respond to specific country needs and context. It is also essential that renewed focus is put on strengthening and using country systems, including country results frameworks and public financial management and procurement systems.

II. Science and technology

43. Without knowledge it is impossible to steer towards more sustainable solutions. Investment in multidisciplinary research is essential to obtain the necessary evidence on effective ways to shift towards sustainability in different socioeconomic and cultural contexts. Research should support the development of metrics and indicators to review national policies and investments.

44. The level of ambition of the Sustainable Development Goals requires new ways of thinking about development and using the potential of science, technology and innovation. The goal is not only to encourage more innovation, but, most

importantly, to encourage the types of innovation that help to eradicate poverty. Low-cost medical products and services, such as cheap ultrasound scanners or locally developed eye care solutions detecting eye diseases, can serve the needs of untapped markets and significantly improve the life of the poor.

45. New possibilities for pro-poor financial inclusion are being created by ICT. Innovations in credit and payment are not only transforming mechanisms of transactions and finance, but also have the potential to reach and meet the needs of millions of people who are without access to formal financial services. Crowdfunding, peer-to-peer lending and social impact bonds are new ways to access capital.

46. Universal access to ICT is of increased importance for achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, including for providing crucial services to groups such as persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples. Policy options can include adoption of a national broadband plan promoting development of content and human capacities, monitoring access, tax reductions to reduce overall tariffs and promote affordability, predictable and stable regulations, investment in ICT infrastructure such as broadband designed with high-speed backhaul and availability of relevant digital content, including in local languages.

47. Harnessing the potential of technology for sustainable development requires investment in research and development, human capital (including education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics and entrepreneurial and managerial skills), infrastructure and knowledge flows. Creating an environment for innovation also benefits from an enabling environment, gender-sensitive approaches to technology development and dissemination and regional and international collaboration.

48. To measure the extent to which ICT access and use help to reduce poverty and improve livelihoods, more indicators need to be considered to reflect affordability, inclusiveness and quality of access to ICT.

IV. Sectoral issues in focus

49. While an integrated and holistic way of looking at the 2030 Agenda was shared by all commissions, platforms and other bodies, the entities also delved into analysis of specific topics.

50. Depending on their mandates and priorities, several commissions, platforms and other bodies delved into specific Sustainable Development Goals, particularly the Goals that are under review at the high-level political forum in 2017. The entities[*] gave numerous examples of previous and ongoing initiatives to support the implementation of these Goals.

A. Conflict and safety

51. The most recent projections suggest that approximately half of the global poor now live in States characterized by conflict and violence. Protracted crises call for specially designed and targeted assistance that addresses the immediate need to save lives and alleviate suffering, and also boosts resilience and the capacity to prepare

[*] Commission on Narcotic Drugs, Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Committee of Experts on Public Administration, Global Forum on Migration and Development, International Telecommunication Union, Ozone Secretariat, World Trade Organization and World Bank Group.

for, absorb and prevent humanitarian disasters, crises and long-term stresses in the future.

52. Conflicts and situations of instability and insufficient governance exacerbate pre-existing patterns of discrimination against women and girls, exposing them to heightened risks of violations of their human rights. Women and girls are primarily and increasingly targeted for the perpetration of acts of sexual violence, including as a tactic of war. Violence against women and girls and their trafficking also spikes in post-conflict societies. Access to essential services such as health care, including sexual and reproductive health services, can be disrupted. Internally displaced women can be disproportionately affected by the loss of livelihoods during displacement. Women's exclusion from conflict prevention efforts, post-conflict transition and reconstruction processes are ongoing matters of concern for the international community.

53. Extreme poverty and hunger, unequal distribution of resources, limited access to health and education, and social and political marginalization are conditions that can be effectively exploited by terrorists in order to attract, radicalize and recruit more supporters. Increasing cross-border terrorism activity represents a major challenge and requires more efficient and faster law enforcement, intelligence and judicial cooperation. These include expedited exchanges of information on individual terrorists and terrorist organizations, including foreign terrorist fighters, terrorist financing and effective legislation and treaties for enabling extradition and mutual legal assistance, to name a few.

B. Decent work and employment

54. The pursuit of decent work along the four dimensions of employment creation, social protection, fundamental rights at work and social dialogue is an effective approach to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Poverty is often the outcome of being trapped in the informal economy without opportunities for formal jobs that would provide a stable income, social security and decent work, and transition to the formal economy should be supported.

55. In many countries and regions with higher rates of poverty and hunger, more than half of the population is currently under the age of 25, with the majority of these young people living in rural areas and settlements, even as migration to cities expands. This calls for concerted efforts to support youth employment.

56. Policy recommendations on ways to accelerate progress in poverty eradication include:

(a) Creating financial and non-financial partnerships at the national, regional and international levels, including South-South and triangular cooperation, as a means to unlock additional resources, intensify collaboration and improve the effectiveness of the efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals;

(b) Strengthening national institutional and local capacity and creating an enabling environment of sustainable enterprises;

(c) Promoting transition from the informal economy;

(d) Supporting capacity-building and partnerships for strengthening statistical data collection and analysis;

(e) Addressing the specificities of countries in greater need, such as least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States;

(f) Reducing gender inequality in all its forms by creating decent work opportunities and increasing minimum wages, and promoting equality in the world of work;

(g) Strengthening institutions and building capacities for enabling rights, such as freedom of association and collective bargaining.

C. Education

57. As a basic human right, education is an enabling right for other social and economic rights, such as the right to a decent income. In addition to the individual benefits of schooling, education also plays important social and economic roles. It is therefore vital to tackle inequality in access and inequity in quality and learning outcomes.

58. In 2014, 1 out of 10 primary school-age children worldwide had either dropped out or had never set foot in a classroom. Pre-primary access in low incomes countries is still hovering at 17 per cent, compared with 83 per cent for high-income countries. Access to higher education has expanded rapidly in wealthier countries with enrolment in the richest countries at 74 per cent, compared with 8 per cent in the poorest; but even in the richest countries significant disparities in access among the rich and poor are observed.

59. A range of countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, will need to invest substantially in school infrastructure, including by strengthening the provision of pre-primary and early childhood development services and human capital, as the lack of trained teachers and appropriate school conditions is jeopardizing the prospect of quality education for all.

60. The emphasis on lifelong learning is important for ensuring that individuals' skills and competencies are maintained and improved as work, technology and skill requirements change. Accordingly, education systems must be relevant and respond to rapidly changing labour markets, technological advances, urbanization, migration, political instability, environmental degradation, natural hazards and disasters, competition for natural resources, demographic challenges, increasing global unemployment, persistent poverty, widening inequality and expanding threats to peace and safety. Education for sustainable development can enable children, youth and adults to deal with global challenges — extreme violence, climate change, financial crises and health pandemics — collectively in an increasingly interconnected world.

D. Gender equality

61. In numerous inputs synthesized in the present report, the need to address gender inequality in implementation of all the Sustainable Development Goals and to recognize the vital role women can play in achieving the goals was highlighted.

62. Despite raised awareness of the impact of gender-based violence against women, including domestic violence, harmful practices and violence in conflict situations, the effectiveness of policies to address gender equality remains low. Disturbingly, the level of gender-based violence against women is increasing in many parts of the world, as it is linked with conflict situations, environmental degradation and rising economic and social inequality.

63. The sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls are insufficiently, and sometimes not at all, realized. Violation of these rights is frequent

and takes many forms, including denial of access to services that only women require, such as safe abortion and post abortion care, as well as through provision of low quality health-care services and non-consensual performance of medical procedures, including forced sterilization, forced virginity examinations and forced abortion. Rights are also violated when they are subjected to female genital mutilation and early, child and forced marriages, which expose girls to the dangers of early pregnancy.

64. Access to justice by women remains an overall problem, owing to factors such as gender stereotyping, discriminatory laws, including discriminatory procedural and evidentiary requirements and practices, intersecting or compounded discrimination, and a failure to systematically ensure that judicial mechanisms are physically, economically, socially and culturally accessible to all women.

65. Unpaid domestic and care work burdens women disproportionally and there is a need to reduce and redistribute it among the State, private sector, communities, families, men and women. Governments should adopt policies to support the participation of women in the labour force, parental leave for both fathers and mothers, affordable child care and long-term care for older persons, when needed. Such policies can ease downward pressures on the birth rate while contributing to gender equality and women's empowerment.

66. Women's poverty is directly related to the absence of economic opportunities and autonomy, lack of access to economic and productive resources, quality education and support services, the gender digital divide and women's minimal participation in the decision-making process. These challenges can be exacerbated during economic, financial and humanitarian crises, armed conflict and post-conflict situations, natural and man-made disasters, and refugee and internal displacement settings. The situation of women with disabilities and indigenous, rural and migrant women and girls also deserves special attention. Globally, and with few exceptions, rural women disproportionately experience poverty and exclusion. Policy recommendations for ensuring women's economic empowerment include:

(a) Strengthening normative, legal and policy frameworks;

(b) Strengthening education, training and skills development;

(c) Implementing economic and social policies for women's economic empowerment;

(d) Addressing the growing informality of work and mobility of women workers;

(e) Managing technological and digital change for women's economic empowerment;

(f) Strengthening women's collective voice, leadership and decision-making;

(g) Strengthening the role of the private sector in women's economic empowerment.

E. Health

67. The tobacco industry and the deadly impact of its products cost the world's economies more than $1 trillion annually in health-care expenditures and lost productivity. In every region of the world tobacco use is highest among the poor. Nearly 80 per cent of 1 billion smokers worldwide live in low- and middle-income countries. Effective tobacco pricing and tax measures are an important means of

reducing tobacco consumption by various segments of the population, in particular young people, women and the poor, who have been shown to be more responsive to price increases.

68. A multi-pronged approach to working on drug demand reduction and related health issues is required, including by supporting a balanced public health-oriented approach to the drug problem, working to end discrimination against, and promote interventions for, people who use drugs and strengthening access to comprehensive, evidence-based and gender-responsive services for the prevention of drug use and treatment of drug use disorders, including as an alternative to conviction or punishment.

69. Availability of internationally controlled drugs for medical and scientific purposes, including for the relief of pain and suffering, remains low to non-existent in many countries of the world. There is a need to enhance national efforts and international cooperation at all levels to address that situation by promoting measures to ensure availability and accessibility of controlled drugs for medical and scientific purposes, within the framework of the national legal system, while simultaneously preventing their diversion, abuse and trafficking in order to fulfil the aims and objectives of the three international drug control conventions.

70. Policies to support further improvements in maternal and child care and to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services are critical to achieve further reductions in maternal and child mortality. Typically, such policies also lead to a reduction in the birth rate.

F. Social protection

71. Addressing the deep inequalities that exist in many countries may require governments to play a greater role in effective wealth redistribution and social protection. Well-functioning social protection policies not only improve equity for the poor and vulnerable people, but also enhance resilience against impacts of different shocks for the most vulnerable and the near poor and create opportunity for all people.

72. Social protection floors provide a framework for coordinated public support to households and thus require integrated support from governments. One-stop-shop models for delivering social protection floors and related programmes can assist in reaching the poorest, most vulnerable and most remote people. The extension of social protection systems provides a fundamental contribution to the elimination of both extreme and working poverty, reducing hunger and improving access to health services and the situation of women and marginalized groups, including migrants and young people, and therefore makes a contribution to the realization of the principle of leaving no one behind. Social protection floors are much more sustainable when there is a progressive shift towards formal economic activities.

73. Poverty eradication strategies based on conditional cash transfers coupled with empowerment have been shown to bring improvements in incomes, children's health, nutrition and education, thereby having long-term positive impacts on productivity and wealth creation as well as contributing to breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty.

G. Ecosystems and biodiversity

74. Ecosystems are the Earth's life support systems and provide the services that underpin human lives and prosperity. Globally, some 2.6 billion people draw their

livelihoods either partially or fully from agriculture and 1.6 billion depend on forests and more than 3 billion people depend on marine and coastal biodiversity. However, these ecosystems are under threat. Overreliance on firewood and charcoal use in remote rural areas, for example, exacerbates deforestation, which in turn increases the incidences of landslides, avalanches and floods in these areas, wiping out many development gains that would have been made. Indoor air pollution related to the use of open fires or traditional stoves for cooking and heating results in 4.3 million premature deaths annually. In coastal communities, increasing marine debris is taking a heavy toll on local fisheries.

75. Between 660 million and 820 million people (workers and their families) are estimated to depend totally or partly on fisheries, aquaculture and related industries as a source of income, and many aquaculture ventures are considered small-scale, often family-based, activities. To promote sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, it is crucial to address fish consumption in diets, food safety, overcapacity and overfishing, loss and waste along the fish value chain, climate change adaptation strategies, the specific contribution and requirements of small-scale fisheries, fish trade, social protection and labour rights, and the gender dimension of fisheries.

76. Illegal trade in wildlife has become a sophisticated transnational form of crime, comparable to other serious organized crimes, such as trafficking in drugs, persons, arms and counterfeit goods. It is driven by rising demand and is often facilitated by corruption and weak governance. There is strong evidence of the increased involvement of organized criminal groups and non-state armed groups. Illegal wildlife trade undermines the rule of law, threatens national security and degrades ecosystems. Criminals often exploit impoverished local communities by encouraging them to engage in illegal harvesting in exchange for a small payment, which exposes them to the risk of injury from dangerous animals or arrest by the authorities.

77. Several conservation measures include innovative mechanisms to address poverty, mainly in rural areas. However, studies and discussions suggest that the existence of these mechanisms alone does not guarantee that they contribute to poverty reduction. It is necessary to ensure that the benefits produced by such mechanisms reach the poorest and the most vulnerable by embedding rights-based approaches into policy designs and accountability of such interventions through monitoring and reporting. In this vein, the customary rights and laws of indigenous peoples and local communities to access, use, govern and manage lands and natural resources were repeatedly highlighted.

78. Concrete proposals were made to strengthen multilevel environmental governance through:

(a) Development and implementation of integrated policies, international and national legislation and actions incorporating specific measures targeting the most vulnerable, including women and children, and through them future generations;

(b) Involvement of the public and private sectors, researchers, relevant stakeholders and citizens in creative strategic partnerships which can foster innovation and disseminate good practices;

(c) Increased coherence in the implementation of different international agreements, including the Paris Agreement on climate change and the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, as well as major outcome documents such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Agenda for Action and the New Urban Agenda.

H. Desertification

79. Hundreds of millions of people face the consequences of desertification. Various studies have found that global environmental change could drive anywhere from 50 million to almost 700 million people to migrate by 2050. The environmental effect on migration patterns may grow as the impacts of climatic and societal change become more apparent and this is especially true for people living in drylands. Given that over 40 per cent of the world's poor depend on degraded lands for essential services, such as provision of food, fuel, raw material and water purification, restoring productive capacity of the land could lead to significant strides in decreasing economic vulnerability and promoting long-term development.

80. Proposed policy actions to tackle desertification include:

(a) Formulate and/or mainstream and implement proper policy interventions in line with the principle of land degradation neutrality, enforce existing rules and regulations in the areas of land use planning and land tenure, and support the scaling up of best technologies and human and institutional capacities for effective sustainable land management;

(b) Increase investment in sustainable land management by devoting significant national budget resources and mobilizing international funding;

(c) Strengthen partnership and synergy by building a common action-based sustainable land management framework with Governments, donors, non-governmental organizations and United Nations organizations.

I. Energy

81. The world is going through an energy transition driven by the fast-paced development of new technology, a digital revolution, global environmental challenges and changing growth and demographic patterns. Countries around the world are facing the triple challenge of simultaneously improving energy security, expanding energy equity and reducing carbon emissions.

82. Energy policies will play a key role in achieving global climate goals, but current market signals alone are not enough to improve critical areas such as energy efficiency, improved electrical storage, market penetration of clean transport and much needed adoption of carbon sequestration. Focused policies and institutional frameworks are required to reinforce a wider deployment of solutions that accelerate the transition and drive consumer choice towards the most carbon-neutral and cost-effective solutions. Rapid and successful transitioning of global transport to low carbon solutions presents the biggest obstacle and opportunity in achieving climate goals. Solar and wind power will continue to grow rapidly with the electrification of energy use becoming an unstoppable trend. Entirely new skill sets, business models and financing solutions are required to deal with these new realities.

83. With increasing systems integration, resilience is no longer just about building stronger systems and returning single assets to full operation after a disruptive event. When interdependent systems are blacked out, by extreme weather or cyberattack, the system as a whole is at risk of being deadlocked. Black-starting capability, decentralized decision-making autonomy and local empowerment have become key concepts of a new approach known as "soft resilience".

84. Despite endeavours having been made towards global energy strategies, work remains to be done, including minimizing international tariff and non-tariff trade barriers for clean energy goods and services to enable clean energy deployment;

introducing carbon pricing mechanisms to ensure adequate investment signals; reinforcing regional infrastructure integration; and market harmonization measures to ensure effective sharing of resources.

J. Water and sanitation

85. Access to water, sanitation and hygiene promotes economic development for individuals, households and society, and is thus key to ending poverty. A lack of sanitation alone costs the global economy $222.9 billion every year. Open defecation is a symptom of poverty, and it also leads to ill-health and malnutrition, particularly in young children, and to reduced life chances.

86. Governments and other development partners should increase investment in the enabling environment: better institutions and better systems for the delivery, operation and maintenance of water and sanitation services to ensure that no one is left behind. Delivering universal access to sustainable sanitation requires the community as a whole to provide and pay for the infrastructure and operations of the services, with predictable cost recovery through service charges or taxes. Some short-term support from national budgets or international aid should be allocated to assist meeting the initial costs where this is possible. People who are unable to pay their full share of the charges or taxes need to be identified and provided with support.

87. Water scarcity and keeping ecosystems healthy are interlinked. Over 1.7 billion people are currently living in river basins where water use exceeds recharge. By 2050, at least 1 in 4 people is likely to live in a country affected by chronic or recurring shortages of fresh water. With increasing competition for water in agriculture and other sectors, national and provincial governments will need to effectively communicate information concerning water scarcity conditions and allocate water with the right mix of concern for equity and efficiency. Just as security of land tenure is essential for encouraging efficient use of land, secure water rights and allocations can motivate farmers to invest in their land and improve returns generated from irrigated agriculture.

88. Women and girls struggle if they do not have easy access to safe water and sanitation, as the management of water and sanitation within the household often falls on their shoulders. It has long been recognized that education of girls and women has a direct impact on health and education levels not only of the girls and women themselves, but also of the generation that follows.

K. Food and nutrition

89. An estimated 793 million people, 10.8 per cent of the global population, lack access to an adequate level of dietary intake. This includes 156 million stunted children. Progress is uneven across regions, with the majority of hungry people concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia. In 2017, famine was declared for the first time in six years.

90. Food systems should urgently be transformed and move away from feeding people to nourishing people, with the aim of eliminating all forms of malnutrition and ensuring well-being and prosperity. Good nutrition is associated with mental acuteness and higher individual earnings. These outcomes in turn support macroeconomic and societal growth. Good nutrition during the first 1,000 days of a child's life is critical to achieving full physical, intellectual and human potential in adolescence and adulthood.

91. Food systems have an impact on natural resources in the way we produce, transform, transport and consume food. Hence, there is a need for improved management of agriculture, aquaculture and wild capture fisheries. Realistic changes in the management of crops and livestock could substantially reduce both water consumption and pollution. Significant reductions in fishing pressure and changes in fishing techniques in most marine fisheries would lead to rebuilding of fisheries over the next one to two decades. Considering that an estimated one third of all food produced for human consumption is lost or wasted on an annual basis, it is imperative to address this. Food is also linked to climate change. At the global level, it is estimated that shifting to more plant-based diets could reduce global mortality by 6-10 per cent and food-related greenhouse gas emissions by 29-70 per cent compared with a reference scenario in 2050.

92. Small-scale food producers (including small-scale farmers, artisanal fisherfolks and pastoralists) and other key actors across agrifood systems play a critical role in catalysing rural transformations that ensure sustainable livelihoods and human dignity, particularly in countries where smallholder agriculture is the main provider of food and employment. They should be supported by enabling policies and targeted investment.

93. Some of the important policy recommendations arising from the inputs to the present report include securing tenure rights and equitable access to land, fisheries and forests, investing responsibly in agriculture and food systems, giving special attention to countries in protracted crises, supporting smallholder access to markets, developing nutrition-sensitive integrated social protection policies and programmes, empowering women in rural areas and agriculture, developing decent work, empowering youth and promoting sustainable fisheries and aquaculture.

L. Industrialization

94. The recent successful cases of poverty reduction through rapid industrialization show that inclusive and sustainable industrialization, with an early focus on labour-intensive and export-oriented industries and accompanied by structural transformation towards manufacturing industries, is one of the most effective ways to eradicate poverty.

95. Proposed policy steps include:

(a) Promote partnerships between host country Governments and all relevant actors to mobilize private and public investment around a long-term, inclusive and sustainable industrialization plan for export-oriented and job-creating industrial capacity;

(b) Design and implement industrial policies that promote employment, reduce poverty and comply with local and international standards to facilitate integration into global value chains;

(c) Provide technical cooperation services for capacity-building and vocational and other training, especially for women and youth;

(d) Increase public and private sector, domestic and foreign investment in research and development, innovation, education, training and infrastructure to increase competitiveness, including of small and medium-sized enterprises;

(e) Support efforts to reduce risks associated with industrialization;

(f) Promote industrialization that encourages employment instead of displacement and analyse and disseminate evidence and statistics associated with the effect of skilled labour bias on policy decisions.

M. Trade

96. Trade is an engine for inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction that contributes to the promotion of sustainable development. Accounting for more than 50 per cent of the gross domestic product of low-income countries, international trade can be an important source of finance to both the private sector and the public sector in developing countries. One argument often made against trade is that it sends jobs overseas, particularly in manufacturing. The reality is that technology and innovation are having a much bigger impact on the structure of labour worldwide. It is crucial to ensure that trade is inclusive and that it benefits the big and the small, that it creates wealth and decent jobs and that when trade has adverse effects, those who have been affected are helped to readjust to the new environment.

97. Some policy recommendations going forward include: continuing to reduce trade costs; building supply-side capacity and trade-related infrastructure; focusing on export diversification and value addition; enhancing the services sector; applying flexible rules of origin to increase utilization of preference schemes; reducing the distortionary effects of non-tariff measures; making electronic commerce a force for inclusion; addressing the shortfalls of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises; and deepening the multilateral trading system.

N. Emerging challenges and opportunities

98. The high-level political forum is mandated to address new and emerging issues, thereby providing a space for all stakeholders to discuss these unaddressed challenges. In this regard, the entities providing inputs to the present report highlighted the need for evidence-based decision-making and free access to discussions by all stakeholders to ensure that the latest information available can be used by the policymakers.

O. Changes in food systems

99. Growing demand for agricultural products is driving major changes in food systems worldwide, with multiple and diverse economic, social and environmental consequences, including the increasing challenge of food loss and waste. Unsustainable practices in agriculture and forestry, such as pollution by fertilizers, chemicals and pesticides, conversion of habitats and excessive water withdrawal, cause substantial environmental degradation and biodiversity loss. The combination of expanded agriculture and bioenergy could result in a global land squeeze in which there would not be sufficient room to conserve natural terrestrial habitats, leading to large declines in biodiversity. Simultaneously, the world's oceans and coasts are highly threatened and subject to rapid environmental change. Coral reefs continue to be degraded, and nearly 90 per cent of fisheries stocks are said to be fully fished or overfished.

P. Climate change and the environment

100. In numerous inputs to the present report, the increased effects of climate change were highlighted. For example, the frequency, severity and range of droughts in arid regions have increased significantly in the past few decades, causing desertification, water shortage, reduced crop production and loss of grazing land. Furthermore, prolonged droughts cause nitrates to accumulate to toxic levels in common crop plants, such as barley, maize and millet, which, when consumed in

large quantities, causes poisoning in cattle, sheep and goats as their ruminant digestive processes cannot break down the nitrate fast enough. Such plant toxicity can ruin the livelihoods of smallholder farmers and herders.

101. Projected changes in climate would have a broad range of impacts on biodiversity at the genetic, species and ecosystem levels and on the services these ecosystems provide. These conditions exacerbate poverty and deepen existing tensions among affected communities. Climate induced migration rips communities apart. Often women, children and the elderly suffer the consequences of climate change disproportionately.

102. Other emerging issues identified in relation to the environment included:

(a) Significance of the financial sector in advancing environmental sustainability by investing in low carbon, resource efficient and environmentally sound assets;

(b) Zoonoses (diseases that can be passed between animals and humans) and their linkage with ecosystem health;

(c) Microplastics, which threaten the marine environment and various organisms in it, with a high risk to human health through consumption of contaminated food;

(d) Toxin accumulation in crops due to increased aridity;

(e) Illegal trade in wildlife.

Q. Conflicts, crime and terrorism

103. Radicalization and violent extremism that lead to terrorism are growing problems throughout the world. Simultaneously, current nationalist backlashes against multilateralism, tolerance and international solidarity between and openness of societies seriously hamper efforts to create development-oriented migration policies aimed at contributing to poverty alleviation at the international level. In this regard, in addition to addressing the root causes discussed earlier in the present report, it is important to ensure that incitement to terrorism, glorification of terrorism, terrorist recruitment and terrorist propaganda are criminalized, as well as to set up the necessary legal and administrative measures with the rule of law and human rights serving as the fundamental bases for preventing and countering terrorism.

104. Proliferation of new forms of illicit trafficking and crime and the continued activities of criminal groups hinder access to public goods by the most vulnerable, including in urban contexts. These activities also pose a significant risk especially for the disenfranchised and vulnerable groups, such as youth and single mothers, who may choose to follow opportunities for income generation linked to crime and subsequently be imprisoned for minor and non-violent crimes. Women also suffer disproportionately at cramped refugee camps where thousands of people are living in extreme poverty, without access to basic services. Violence against women is escalating and becoming normalized in many of these camps.

R. Migration and antiglobalization

105. In the midst of economic austerity, armed conflict and humanitarian disasters, people are increasingly on the move, seeking a better life in wealthier and more peaceful societies. International migration, particularly at the levels experienced

over the past five years, triggers significant changes in societies which, if poorly managed, can lead to tension and intolerance. A rise in antiglobalization discourse has evolved in some countries and communities. In this rhetoric, international trade is often, wrongly, singled out as a major cause of instability in labour markets.

106. Migrants and refugees have been subject to racial discrimination, hate speech and violence in host countries, which can lead to exclusion from accessing rights, including decent work and social services, leaving them once again in a situation of poverty. With the increase in incitement to racial discrimination in public discourse, the risk of discrimination within the public administration can also rise and protecting against racial discrimination in the public administration, in particular in the administration and functioning of the criminal justice system, is highlighted.

S. New technologies

107. The rise of new technologies brings with it opportunities and challenges. New technologies can provide new forms of employment and enhance robust governance and citizens' participation in public and political spheres, if proper measures are taken. ICT has been instrumental in developing new and more affordable digital financial products that better respond to the needs of people without access to banking services in the world today, most notably rural and remote communities. A broader uptake of electronic commerce, supported by ICT adoption, offers significant opportunities for growth, development and job creation, if access and affordability of ICT, as well as connectivity issues, are tackled.

108. Artificial intelligence is growing rapidly with the potential to become truly scalable and capable of solving some of the most pressing challenges to our societies and economies. A multi-stakeholder approach is needed in designing systems based on artificial intelligence, as not only would this help to ensure the responsible and beneficial development of artificial intelligence by allowing additional cross-checks, it would also contribute to dispelling misconceptions and fears surrounding it.

109. The Internet of things, connecting smart devices, applications, services and even people over the Internet network, provides both opportunities and challenges. Internet of things applications in agricultural fields can check soil conditions, connected thermometers can monitor vaccine delivery and storage in real time, smart sensors can measure pollution levels in the air or water, and other smart devices can provide remote diagnosis of diseases. Standards need to be developed to enable interoperability of Internet of things applications and datasets employed by the systems of various vertically oriented industry sectors.

110. At the same time, the impact of technological change on the existence and quality of jobs may also negatively influence poverty eradication. The impact of new technologies on employment goes beyond job creation or destruction: technological change can also replace jobs traditionally carried out by unskilled workers with new tasks requiring more qualified workers, leading to polarization of the labour market. With ICT increasingly underpinning a broad range of human activities, modern societies have developed a growing dependency on ICT in their daily operations and management of critical infrastructure. This creates risks and vulnerabilities, from natural disasters, cyberattacks or other challenges, that need to be addressed at all levels in collaboration with all stakeholders.

T. Private sector accountability

111. Private actors, including business, have the potential either to support or undermine rights-based implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Business activities that do not respect human rights pose a risk, including in the case of business enterprises that have adverse impacts on the livelihoods and rights of local and indigenous communities, or on the environment. In addition, it will be important to provide sufficient safeguards to ensure accessibility, affordability and quality of the services and infrastructures that popular public-private partnerships are expected to deliver, or to ensure that they do not create unacceptable contingent liabilities for governments.

V. High-level political forum

112. The high-level political forum serves as the apex platform for the review of and follow-up to the Sustainable Development Goals. The inputs received from the various commissions, platforms and other bodies highlighted numerous additional areas in which the forum can accelerate progress towards achieving the Goals. It was noted in several inputs that the forum should provide strong political guidance, including for prioritization of actions. The encouragement, guidance and engagement of the forum could contribute significantly to achieving prioritized aims. Now that the 2030 Agenda has been agreed, the forum should examine how it can contribute to keeping up the momentum for integrated implementation of the Goals.

A. Supporting integration and policy coherence

113. Governments and stakeholders need to translate the global goals and targets into country level policies, programmes and actions. It was noted that the high-level political forum should champion the idea of integrated planning, which should be seen as the cornerstone of policymaking under the sustainable development agenda. In this regard, the forum could:

(a) Provide a platform for exchanging lessons learned and for sharing and encouraging the adoption of good practices on the implementation of the Goals, while addressing implementation challenges;

(b) Provide guidance and improve understanding on the diverse interlinkages that exist among the different Goals, the different dimensions of sustainable development and peace and security, and encourage holistic nexus thinking and highlight the cross-cutting issues and their importance;

(c) Foster development of a shared national vision at the country level and a common corporate strategy for non-state actors, including breaking down silos for delivery and building understanding, capacity and skills for changing the business-as-usual model, and developing creative strategic partnerships across stakeholders;

(d) Draw attention to examples of good practices for coordination of Sustainable Development Goal implementation at the national level, including for stakeholder engagement;

(e) Consider how action regarding respect for human rights, including fundamental principles and rights, can strengthen the integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and ensure that it remains people centred. In this vein, the forum should encourage the inclusion of human rights, including women's and children's rights, as the cornerstones of national planning, implementation and monitoring;

(f) Encourage subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council, including the regional commissions, to foster synergies with the existing relevant global processes, such as the multilateral environmental agreements;

(g) Increase the coherence of implementation efforts by United Nations entities towards the Sustainable Development Goals;

(h) Increase awareness of the numerous technical tools and policy products for integrated planning and policymaking provided by numerous actors, including United Nations entities;

(i) Ensure coordination and coherence between efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda and numerous other international commitments and action plans.

B. Reviewing new information

114. By its mandate, the high-level political forum should strengthen the science-policy interface by examining documentation and bringing together dispersed information and assessments. In this vein, the forum could serve as the unique place to review the findings of scientific assessments and the work of scientific panels and bodies in an integrated manner. The forum should encourage academia to produce and share technical and scientific information and evidence to build a sound knowledge base on priority issues.

115. Effective and widespread application of science, technology and innovation will be crucial for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in developing countries. The forum could recognize and highlight the role of science, technology and innovation and advocate their systematic inclusion in implementation policies.

C. Monitoring progress

116. The forum serves as the apex for monitoring and review of implementation towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition to hosting the voluntary national reviews by volunteering Member States, the forum could:

(a) Share lessons learned regarding monitoring and reporting systems, at all levels. Countries and non-state actors could discuss remaining challenges and institutional constraints linked to the reporting burden as well as data collection, management and processing;

(b) Promote coherence, coordination and cooperation at all levels by providing an overview of existing databases, monitoring systems and reporting initiatives at all levels;

(c) Support the development and use of appropriate data collection and monitoring methodologies and adopt approaches to data, statistics and monitoring that focus on the progressive reduction of inequalities and ending discrimination;

(d) Encourage a multi-stakeholder accountability mechanism that ensures the robust participation of a diversity of stakeholders at both the national and international levels;

(e) Incentivize peer learning;

(f) Support better integration of monitoring and review between different levels: local, national, regional and global;

(g) Establish cross-sectoral cooperation and enhance communication and data sharing, so as to maximize synergies and avoid trade-offs;

(h) Recognize human rights mechanisms as an invaluable source of data to support implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda;

(i) Highlight the importance of strengthening statistical data collection and analysis, and the need for enhanced international support, especially for least developed countries;

(j) Make better use of existing mechanisms for data collection and programme development within the United Nations system;

(k) Address the specificities of countries in greater need such as least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States to ensure that no country is left behind;

(l) Support inclusion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls throughout national, regional and global reviews.

D. Connecting people

117. It was noted that the forum could serve as a unique place for connecting all stakeholders and raising awareness on the most needed policy actions. In this way, the forum could:

(a) Engage the wide range of stakeholders concerned with the Sustainable Development Goals and provide them with opportunities to be part of the solution. Identifying who can do what is crucial for development of mutually supportive initiatives;

(b) Support the systematic integration of stakeholders representing a wide range of stakeholders into implementation and monitoring at the local and national levels, reaching from indigenous community leaders to social and legal specialists;

(c) Raise awareness of the importance of sustainable development and implementation actions, particularly for prioritization and for tackling emerging issues;

(d) Consider how action on inequality can be best integrated with other goals through the work of all actors;

(e) Increase the visibility of the work of numerous commissions, platforms and other bodies and encourage further enhanced involvement of all interested stakeholders in the work of these bodies;

(f) Raise awareness on the need for increased international cooperation, including South-South and triangular cooperation, in the field of science, technology and innovation.

E. Ensuring adequate support

118. The forum should be seen as a venue where countries can openly talk about their development challenges and seek support for their efforts. It was highlighted in the inputs to the present report that the forum could provide a platform for political guidance on the means of implementation, including financing, required for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

119. In several inputs, the significant financing gaps for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals were noted. The forum could give political support to existing financing initiatives and for better targeted financing from all sources. It was noted that for the majority of the initiatives there is no doubt that the bulk of resources will need to come from domestic resources, although external finance will remain critical for the poorest countries at least for the next generation.